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Language Contact at the Romance-Germanic
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South Tyrol: German and Italian in a Changing World

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In South Tyrol the Italian and German languages have coexisted for centuries. After a problematic development in the first half of the 20th century the situation has stabilised through an intense programme to protect the German-speaking minority living there. Though these protective measures were introduced primarily to keep the linguistic identity of the Italian and German language groups stable, they have led to a considerable degree of individual bilingualism, especially with the speakers of German. At the same time certain means were introduced to facilitate the use of German in the legal and administrative context of Italy. So these steps at the end have led to an intensified contact between the languages, and there is a growing awareness of the advantages of speaking more than one language. With the opening towards Europe and with general trends in society like globalisation and individualisation, a new model of a bilingual identity is developing which takes into consideration its usefulness in modern transcultural interaction as well as its value for regional self-identification. This development also leads to a higher degree of linguistic variation in the society of South Tyrol.

Burden and Chances of the Past

In South Tyrol populations speaking Romance and Germanic languages have coexisted at least from the Early Middle Ages onwards. This does not mean, however, that they were equally spread over the whole area from the crest of the Alps southwards to the 'Salurner Klause' (cf. Eichinger, 1996: 201–202; Riehl, 2000: 235).

The language groups have always been segregated regionally and to a certain amount they still are today. While most of the Italian-speaking people live along the rivers of Eisack and Etsch, the mountain region is a stronghold of the German-speaking population, and the speakers of Ladinian live there too. Language contact and individual bilingualism traditionally have been found in the southern part, where Italian is the neighbouring language, and along the rivers, where there is traffic and communication. In addition, the agglomerations around the towns of Bozen and Meran have always attracted people of both language groups – this effect accelerated due to economic modernisation and political development during the 20th century. But all in all the language groups lived side by side for a number of centuries with only a limited amount of out-of-group communication and individual bilingualism. This worked rather well because within the feudal system the ruling elites did not care too much about what languages were spoken by their subjects – and used French and Latin respectively for their upper-class communication. In addition, for a long time the area of South Tyrol belonged to the Habsburg empire, which had to deal with ethnic and linguistic diversity in many areas. Lastly, the predominantly rural

way of life did not promote contact between the language groups – this concerns above all the German- and Ladinian-speaking population of the alpine valleys. This picture has changed from the beginning of the 19th century onwards, when the vernaculars have been used in all official contexts and group identities have begun to concentrate around the topic of shared languages.

This emphasis on the relation of nation and language led to a critical development for South Tyrol. The national revival in Italy during the second half of the 19th century strengthened powers demanding that Italian should be spoken in all parts of the country, the natural borders of which were considered to be the peaks of the Alps. Within this national concept the idea of a multilingual organisation like the Habsburg monarchy seemed obsolete. So when South Tyrol after World War I became a part of Italy, this had immediate linguistic consequences, which showed particularly after the fascists took over in Rome in the early 1920s: they banned the use of the German dialects and of German altogether and forced the use of Italian – at least in all public domains. In the 1930s these activities were paralleled by an industrialisation campaign for the area around Bozen. Through this campaign a large number of Italian-speaking people of different origin were brought into this area, which strengthened the position of the Italian language. The final climax of the repression of the German-speaking people of South Tyrol was reached when, in 1939, they were forced to decide whether to stay with the German language and as a consequence move out of Italy, or to stay and shift to using Italian – this was what Mussolini and Hitler had agreed on in the so called 'Option'. The vast majority had voted for staying with German and a large number of them had already been removed from Italy. When they came back after World War II the preconditions for the two language groups living together peacefully were not very promising. And indeed in the first years the Italian state only reluctantly complied with the demands of the peace treaties (cf. Alcock, 2000: 171). The unwillingness of the Italian government to do so in turn strengthened the feeling of belonging together within the German-speaking population. This finally led to a political clash, culminating in bomb attacks and similar acts of violence in the early 1960s. Solving this political problem was made easier when in the 1960s minorities and their representation in democratic societies became a general topic of political discussion. It fits into this development that in 1969 the so-called 'Paket' solution for South Tyrol was brought on its way. This set of laws gradually led to a far-reaching protection of the German- and Ladinian-speaking minorities in South Tyrol. It took from 1972 to 1992 to implement and bring into force these regulations. A formal end was put to this process when, on 11th June 1992, the Austrian government issued the 'Streitbeilegungserklärung', which had been agreed upon in 1969 (cf. Eichinger, 1996: 209–210). As since 1995 all the parties involved have become members of the EU, a new era in the political discussion about South Tyrol has begun. Now it has to be ensured that the level of protection achieved within the state can be kept up.

Ties with the German-speaking Neighbours

Up to the recent past most speakers of German in South Tyrol were not exposed to an intense language contact. This stabilised the language situation as well as the fact that the German speaking population in South Tyrol – unlike the

Ladinians – has never constituted a 'Sprachinsel', but represents the southern end of the coherent area where German is spoken as a mother tongue. Until 1918 this connection was strengthened by South Tyrol being part of the Habsburg empire, where German was an official language. In principle, therefore, German in South Tyrol took part in the developments and standardisation processes which took place in the German language as a whole – and which came to an end during the 19th century. But the use of German in South Tyrol shares many characteristics with southern Germany, while standardisation of German followed a northern type of language and language use. And South Tyrol as part of the Habsburg empire after 1871 was cut off from the standardisation processes taking place in the German Reich. This is the beginning of 'teutonisms' and 'austriacisms', i.e. variants of national validity within standard German. And although this concerns Austria maybe more directly than South Tyrol, it got higher importance in South Tyrol, when – after World War I – German got the status of a minority language in Italy. All in all the linguistic relation with the German-speaking neighbours to the north is characterised by a mixture of binding and segregating factors. This holds for the standard language, but it also applies to spoken dialects. In the view of dialect geography there is continuity between the regional dialects spoken in the neighbouring parts of Austria and in South Tyrol. The dialects spoken in the mountain valleys of South Tyrol differ clearly, but the main isoglosses intersecting South Tyrol lead from north to south. The threefold west to east differentiation found there and analogously continued in Austria is much more important than the rather marginal north–south differences. In the whole of South Tyrol we find southern Bavarian dialects, which show Alemannic features in the west and Carinthian ones in the east (cf. Moser, 1982: 76–8; Lanthaler, 1997: 373–4). There are no really notable differences between the traditional dialects in North and South Tyrol, and there are no clear signs of structural influence of Italian on the traditional local dialects either, (cf. Moser, 1982: 79 ff.). However, we find some features which can be attributed to the language contact situation. So the higher intensity of modulation observed in the South Tyrol varieties when compared with Austria is attributed to the contact with Italian. Things look different from a more pragmatic view. Since the effects of modernisation have become more and more visible even in the remoter areas, there have been changes in the communicative practice, in the attitudes towards other varieties or the concept of multilingualism as a whole. For decades there have been debates about to what degree a South Tyrolean regional koiné was developing and if there was a regional standard. The mainstream of the argumentation held that only the standard of Germany was an acceptable norm, and that there was no vernacular form of German in South Tyrol but a number of related but separated dialects. It was also accepted that a bourgeois city variety existed, spoken especially by the middle class in Bozen, by politicians and in the media (cf. Lanthaler, 2001: 143–146; Moser, 1982: 87). This variety was not highly esteemed by the average South Tyrolean speaker of German.

There have been remarkable changes during the last decade of the 20th century. The 'Paket' regulations caused a far-reaching integration into the legal and administrative system of the Italian state. As a consequence there was a growing need for a German terminology able to cope with this challenge. There was a provision in the law for a committee which was to deal with this problem.

This 'Paritätische-Terminologiekommision' develops terminological solutions for the translation of Italian legislation into German, while at the same time taking into account the legal terminology used in other German-speaking countries (cf. Daniel *et al.*, 2001: 221; Mayer, 1998; Mayer *et al.*, 1996; www.eurac.edu/publications). This commission can rely on the traditional ties to the University of Innsbruck but also on the resources of the newly (1992) founded European Academy Bolzano, an institution whose existence and way of working reflect a turn in language policy in the 'After Paket-Era'. Up to then it was the main aim to tighten the connections with the other German-speaking countries, especially with North Tyrol, to back up political demands: therefore for a long time it was out of the question that there should be no university in South Tyrol. The German part of University education was taken over by the University of Innsbruck. The foundation of the European Academy and the Free University of Bozen/Bolzano (founded in 1997) with its international and multilingual approach and its concentration upon IT and economics shows a different orientation. The cooperation with Innsbruck concerning legal studies is continued (see Bonell & Winkler, 2000: 211–18).

The fact that this dramatic change in handling these politically critical questions did not produce too many problems reflects a basic change of the political constellation. All the states which had to deal with the situation in South Tyrol are now members of the EU and therefore subject to the conditions which are valid in this organisation. In this context the status which the German-speaking minority has reached within Italy has to be analysed and questioned again as to its effectiveness in the European framework. This has led to a positive reinterpretation of the language contact situation and the widespread German–Italian bilingualism caused by it. Speaking two languages, formerly seen as a more or less unavoidable side-effect of the political situation, is now perceived as an advantage for communication in the network of Europe. So at least the German-speaking minority in South Tyrol has taken advantage of being in a situation where its members were forced to communicate in both languages. In this new context the original advantage of the Italian-speaking group in South Tyrol, namely to speak the national language, turns out to be a disadvantage in the multilingual context and in the European perspective, as it stabilises a monolingual pattern (cf. Gubert, 1982: 210). But being embedded in the EU created also a dispute about the legal basis of the relatively comfortable situation of the German-speaking group. As many of the advantages gained by the 'Paket' regulations are based on measures of positive discrimination, they are always prone to interfere with anti-discrimination principles set up within the EU. There are already a few legal cases in which European courts questioned the organisation of bilingual life as it is managed by the South Tyrolean autonomy legislation. They concerned language use before the court and the validity of the 'patentino' (diploma of bilingualism issued after the 'Zweisprachigkeitsprüfung') as the only valid approbation of competence in German and Italian (cf. Alcock, 2000: 187 ff.). At the moment there are rather different opinions to what extent South Tyrol minority regulations are endangered by this legal interference (cf. Grigolli, 1997; Zeyer, 1993).

Law and its Practice

Apart from these uncertainties the linguistic situation in South Tyrol is characterised by a lot of factors which have led to a stable status of bilingualism. As Italian and German are fully standardised national languages, there is no problem in using them as official languages. Many steps are being taken to develop the official parts of the German lexicon which have to fit the formulations and terminological traditions in Italy as well as in the German-speaking countries. But it is obvious that – especially in the field of jurisdiction – there are traditions to be overcome that go far beyond these technical problems. So even nowadays the use of German in court is not very common (cf. Zanon 2001: 172). As far as linguistics is concerned, this shows that it is not sufficient to provide for the necessary words to have a functional means of communication in a situation of cultural contact. In addition, one has to take into account the different traditions of speaking and formulation, of acting linguistically. At the moment, there is no more than anecdotal knowledge about these differences in South Tyrol.

Stable societal bilingualism is intended and provided by the regulations chosen in the field of education. They are all to be seen in the light of the governing principle of mother tongue education, which in practice led to the development of separated school systems for the German- and the Italian-speaking groups. All subjects are taught in the respective mother tongue of the children, which officially has to be stated in the 'Sprachgruppenzugehörigkeitserklärung'. The other official language is taught from the second or third year of primary education. There has been political dispute about this segregation of schools since the 'Paket' process started in 1969 (cf. Czernilofsky, 1998; Riehl, 2000: 241). The German side defended it by stating that German speaking children in South Tyrol, who have one of the local dialects as their mother tongue, would be disturbed in their efforts to learn the German standard variety, if Italian interfered all the time. The Italian-speaking group criticised segregation as being an obstacle for their children to learning how to use German properly. According to them, children with Italian as their mother tongue have only restricted opportunities to use German outside school, so only bilingual surroundings at school can ensure that they acquire adequate communicative skills in German.

As the situation of German has remarkably stabilised and there was a political drift to a greater degree of multilingual competence in the 1990s, there have been experiments to modify the system of segregation (cf. Saxalber-Tetter, 2001). Experiments dealt with earlier teaching of the other language at school and with language programmes in pre-school education. But also more fundamental changes were attempted: an experiment with language immersion was begun but discontinued after a trial period of three years. At the moment, smaller steps in favour of the Italian-speaking group are being taken (cf. Bonell & Winkler, 2000: 200–6). These questions and especially the concept of monolingual schools still have high political priority (cf. Daniel *et al.*, 2001: 218–9).

The so-called 'Proporz', also introduced by the 'Paket' legislation, offers a means of stabilising the bilingual situation in the workforce within the public sector. It is prescribed in this regulation that jobs in the public sector have to be distributed in proportion to the relative size of the language groups (see Bonell &

Winkler, 2000: 99–138). It also demands a certain degree of knowledge of the other language, which is tested (at different levels) by the 'Zweisprachigkeitsprüfung'. This examination is highly selective, especially for people with less formal education (cf. Astat, 1995: 167–8). As we said above there is still doubt if and to what extent the 'Proporz' regulations stand against European law. The problem of its effectiveness sharpens with the privatisation within the public sector, because privatised firms are not covered by this regulation. There is also a debate about the function of the 'Zweisprachigkeitsprüfung' in this context:

Während der Gesetzgeber die Zweisprachigkeitsprüfung ausschließlich als Nachweis für die berufliche Eignung im öffentlichen Dienst definiert, scheinen zumindest Teile der Bevölkerung in Südtirol sie vielmehr als 'Brücke' in eine zweisprachige Gesellschaft zu sehen. Unklare Vorstellungen darüber, was man unter einer 'zweisprachigen Gesellschaft' verstehen will, welche Art und welches Ausmaß an Zweisprachigkeit anzustreben bzw. erreichbar ist, widersprüchliche Vorstellungen darüber, ob man überhaupt eine 'zweisprachige Gesellschaft' anstrebt, die auf jeden Fall zweisprachige Individuen voraussetzt, oder ob man vielmehr die Gleichberechtigung beider Sprachen in Verwaltung und im öffentlichen Dienstleistungsbereich unter Wahrung einer Art 'individueller' oder 'privater Einsprachigkeit' anstrebt – all dies macht es sehr schwierig, ein angemessenes Anforderungsprofil für die Zweisprachigkeitsprüfung zu finden'. (Putzer, 2001: 161)

The Linguistic Situation Seen From the German Side

It is the stability reached by the 'Paket' regulations and the feeling of security associated with this status, which now allows this new way of discussing how societal multilingualism should be handled in South Tyrol and what the role of societal and individual bilingualism should be. The traditional view of a German-speaking group which uses its dialects as their Austrian neighbours and a standard language which follows the norms fixed in Germany, and in addition to this was forced by the political circumstances to use Italian, has been an idealisation for quite a time, but seems now totally unrealistic. A less traditional view gained practical importance within the discourse of globalisation. For regions like South Tyrol, globalisation and the problem of how to react to its challenges came on the agenda during the 1990s (cf. Eichinger, 2001). Globalisation causes an increasing degree of international communication, and for South Tyrol such a development asked for a new balance between functioning in this transcultural modern world and showing one's own regional identity. The tendencies of internationalisation were accompanied on the other hand by a growing degree of individualisation. This trend to accentuate one's own individuality makes it much harder for traditional links and values to be recognised as something important for modern everyday life. Especially young urban people who have passed through higher education and who are the opinion leaders in western European societies therefore developed a new type of bilingual profile. On the one hand, such speakers of German in South Tyrol take advantage of the rights gained in the political struggle of the last 50 years. So when they use German,

they choose it as a symbol of a prestigious group within South Tyrol society, and at the same time profit from the functional value of German within Europe. On the other hand, these people do not mind using Italian or mixing Italian colloquialisms into their own talk. This means they symbolise by this type of language behaviour that they have integrated bilingualism as part of their own identity. This not only enables them to make practical use of their speaking two quite important European languages, but also implies a positive view of this bilingual identity. So what from a traditional point of view is a strange combination of language use makes sense on the level of modern social-symbolic evaluation. Being bilingual and stressing the fact that they want to be locally recognisable by using regional markers, these people are well prepared for the challenges of globalisation and they fit well into the context of European communication. It is obvious that the way the new university plans its studies and represents itself in public also suits this type of reasoning more than it evokes the traditional picture of the German minority in South Tyrol.

The preference for appearing modern as well as having a recognisable regional identity parallels the economic profile of South Tyrol. About one-eighth of the workforce belong to the primary (agriculture), not quite 30% to the secondary (production), and about 60% to the tertiary sector (administration and service). But a strong regional differentiation is hidden behind this overall picture, so that for example in the areas of Meran and Bozen the tertiary sector makes up for over 70% of the working population (cf. Astat, 1995: 183 and ff.).

These developments are also reflected in language use. There are clear changes in the use of the contacting varieties, which even led to the appearance of new language forms and to a different view of their use. Up to the late 1980s German in South Tyrol appeared in two distinct forms – (spoken) local dialect vs. (written) general standard – with nearly no connection existing between them. The situation was described as 'diskontinuierliches Diasystem' (Moser, 1982: 85), i.e. a system in which a spoken local and a written and officially spoken variety coexist without the intervening compromise of a regional spoken substandard ('Umgangssprache'). This type of interpretation held until the 1990s (cf. Eichinger, 1996: 210–211), and it meant that South Tyrolean speakers, when confronted with linguistic challenges at an intermediate level between these varieties, reacted with code-switching or with the repression of the core features of their local dialects.

The picture has changed dramatically in the meantime: since the beginning of the 1990s the appearance of further regional substandards has been noticed (cf. Eichinger, 1996: 211). From the 1990s onwards research has emphasised a growing diversification of the linguistic network of the average South Tyrolean. What this means for the individual speaker is prototypically modelled in Lanthaler (1997 and 2001), where the effects of social age, of education, of mobility in region and society are exemplified by the linguistic biography of a girl from the remote alpine valleys. Lanthaler sketches the typical life of such a girl born in the late 1960s. At school she has to leave behind her local dialect, which used to be sufficient in her village, and has to adapt to different dialects spoken in other parts of South Tyrol. Finally, in the city of Meran, she has to cope with colloquial German, German-Italian bilingualism and with the German spoken by people from Germany. But when she comes back to the mountain

valley she departed from, the linguistic life has changed there, too. Mobility and contact have modified the social networks of the village speakers. In an earlier publication Lanthaler (1997: 377) sketches three varieties which are situated between the traditional local dialect and standard German firstly a form which avoids primary features of the local dialect, then a regional koiné, which takes its regional features from prestige varieties within the region, then a variety still regionally marked but intended for public and official use (so-called 'unfeines Hochdeutsch'). This tripartition is still seen from a dialectological point of view (cf. Auer, 2001: 31). In the meantime, the discussion about the pluricentric character of German (cf. Ammon 2001) allows a more precise description and evaluation. Within this framework the situation in South Tyrol in general looks similar to the linguistic constellation in southern Germany or in Austria. There are of course certain differences, which are due to the minority situation. Both aspects can be shown when we look at the status of a spoken standard form of German. It is true that for southern Germany, for Austria and for South Tyrol, pure 'northern' spoken standard is a form which is not used very often. So in all three areas there is room for a spoken 'high' variety, which shows slight regional markers, but nevertheless is still to be counted as a standard variety. As for South Tyrol, the northern standard on the one hand is accepted as a normative ideal form; on the other hand it is still much more restricted in real use than in the other areas mentioned; and speakers in South Tyrol are much less sure about the degree or regional variation which is 'allowed' within the spoken standard of a pluricentric language. But there are signs for the emancipation of such intermediate forms.

If the 'unfeine Hochdeutsch' is a good candidate for this task, it can't be decided until we know more about its characteristics and its use than we do now. Some phonetic features of the different varieties between dialect and standard are given by Lanthaler (2001: 139–141, 1997: 376–378). Whatever the form of such a variety of German will be, its function gets even clearer by the above-mentioned societal changes in the context of globalisation. As a consequence of this development, the opinion leaders within societies where regional concepts play a role have chosen symbolic forms for their self-representation which clearly show that they are, on the one hand, able to act in modern society, but on the other hand be positively aware of their local traditions. So linguistic markers of regional character are used more to symbolise this type of identity than to be a continuation of traditional regional language use (cf. Auer, 2001: 35–7).

With this new language situation in South Tyrol, variability and the ability to interact in an adequate way in different situations have also got into the focus of linguistic research. There has been a certain interest in questions of this type before: in quite a lot of earlier studies restrictions were applied as to the type of communication that was studied (for an overview see Egger, 1990, 1992). Research focused on the differences between language use in rural areas and in the cities (cf. e.g. Moser & Putzer, 1980; for the Italian side cf. Gubert, 1982), in the media (e.g. Pernstich, 1982), in school (Saxalber-Tetter, 1982) or in official contexts (v. Aufschnaiter, 1982). And this interest did not totally restrict itself to the use of different varieties of German; in some cases the relation to and interaction with varieties of Italian was taken into consideration, as studies on the language use in bilingual families show (cf. Egger, 1985). The influence of Italian on the German language used in South Tyrol was mainly studied with the inten-

tion to find out if it led to its deterioration. Lexical influence on different levels of speech and different techniques of its integration into the system of German were examined. Many of the examples and interpretations given especially in the studies of Masser (1982), Moser (1982), Putzer (1982), Moser & Putzer (1980) and Pernstich (1982) are still cited nowadays, whenever the question of lexical borrowing is dealt with (cf. Riehl, 2000: 237–8). The critical impetus which often underlies such early studies shows up clearly in formulations like the following one:

Wenn man in Südtirol *gettone* sagt statt des gekünstelten und schwerfälligen *Einwurfmünze*, so ist das kein Unglück. Auch nicht, wenn jemand auf dem Postamt einen *rekommandierten Brief* aufgibt. Doch wenn er sich nach der Postzustellung erkundigt und dabei fragt: *Non viene in der Früh?*, dann ist das schlimm, und falls so etwas – aus Gedankenlosigkeit, aus Koketterie oder aus welchen Gründen immer – üblich werden sollte, dann könnte man mit Recht, ja dann müßte man vom Verfall unserer Sprache sprechen. (Masser, 1982: 72–73)

In these short remarks the three arguments mostly used in the description and evaluation of language contact phenomena between Italian and German occur.

Firstly there is a discussion as to what extent one has to do with habitual loans, which are used and accepted by a representative part of the German-speaking population, or with a kind of code-switching, i.e. occasional loan processes. The aim is to know how far the German language is systematically affected by these processes.

Secondly a differentiation is tried between necessary and avoidable loans. So no one doubts that the integration into the political and legal organisation of Italy has linguistic consequences, and the question is only in which way to react. In the meantime the main trend in this respect seems to be the systematic use of the techniques of loan translations or transfers (cf. Lanthaler, 1997: 366). The linguistic handling of the influence of Italian everyday culture on everyday life in South Tyrol is much more complicated. There are lots of instances where the word coming from Italian fits much more naturally into the conversation than a German translation; the most cited example of this fact is without any doubt the word *gettone* (telephone coin), which, slightly adapted by an initial [t], is part of the South Tyrolean lexicon (cf. Moser & Putzer, 1980: 151–152). Another aspect is highlighted by the fact that in colloquial South Tyrolean German quite a few of the modal words, particles, interjections and phrases which are typical of oral strategies, are taken from Italian. They are integrated to a different degree. A good example is the use of the particle or sentential adverb *magari* ('maybe'; cf. Moser & Putzer, 1980: 156): *Treffen wir uns magari um 10 Uhr?* 'Maybe we'll meet at 10 o'clock' (for the slightly different type *perfetto!* – *perfekt!* cf. Riehl, 2000: 237–8). But the influence doesn't stop at word level. There are also contact phenomena on the level of phraseology or syntax, for example the use of *machen* as a function verb in accordance with the corresponding use of *fare* in Italian.

The third argument is about what to do with these influences in the long run. There is no simple way to solve this problem. In the citation above we find the more or less purist alternative, which of course had a different status when the situation of German was not as stable as it is today (cf. Mall & Plagg, 1990).

We had to refer to studies of the 1980 to illustrate the discussion about contact phenomena between Italian and German in South Tyrol. With the changes in society that have occurred in the meantime, communicative practice and the estimation of bilingualism have changed considerably. So it would be very helpful to have new studies to describe this overall variation with new data (cf. Ammon, 2001: 12–14) and in a new theoretical framework, as, for the moment, we mostly rely on intuitive judgements (cf. Lanthaler, 1997: 366–7; 2001: 144, 147–8). Generally research in the 1990s studied linguistic variation in a sociolinguistic framework or in a more specific perspective, dealing with questions of language choice in situations of domains (cf. Eichinger, 1996), but also with diasystematic (e.g. diamedial) competence and variation (cf. Egger, 1993; Riehl, 1997, 2001). As is shown in Eichinger (1996: 225 ff.) – with data from the late 1980s – there is a stable dominance of the use of German in nearly all domains, but remarkable variation in certain situations which are characterised by external factors (e.g. at the working place) or internal social factors (age group and lifestyle; cf. Riehl, 1994: 120). It would be useful if the phenomena considered in our survey could be examined up to the present, as the changes in the social surroundings expect a change in the norms of communication too. To do this it would also be necessary to know more about structural features of central varieties used in South Tyrol today.

Enlightened Bilingualism

And this refers not only to German but also to Italian and its varieties. Obviously the status of Italian in South Tyrol has changed. One of the main reasons for this change is that many speakers of the German-speaking group nowadays systematically use Italian. In the light of these changes research should deal with Italian not only as a source of interference on German but as one of the contact idioms with its characteristic features. The intention should be to accept – without mingling what is not to be mingled – that coping with the existence of the two languages and their contact is the normal state of affairs in South Tyrol. As this paper is written with an explicit focus on the German side a few hints concerning the status of Italian in South Tyrol might be in order. Italian is, as we have said above, traditionally spoken besides German in the region southward of Bozen ('Bozener Unterland') to the Salurner Klause, and to a certain extent in the cities. On the other hand, the status of Italian in South Tyrol was changed considerably during the period of fascism, when there was an era of strict Italianisation, which led to a lot of political problems later on. Apart from the political problems this development has consequences for the type of Italian found in South Tyrol. As Italian can be described as a pluricentric language, too (cf. Sobrero, 2001) and is subject to similar levelling processes between the varieties as German (cf. Stehl, 1994 and Auer, 2001), it is affected by the historical partition of the Italian-speaking group within South Tyrol. In the traditional bilingual part we can find the usual regional and diastratic variation (cf. Mioni, 1990: 23), and the Italian-speaking people in this constellation usually are used to the corresponding system of German varieties. For the other regions, especially for the surroundings of Bozen, the diversity of regions the Italians came from has led to the fact that the Italian used there is much less regionally characterised, so

that the spoken variety of it shows no striking regional features. But there is a rather strong diastatic difference: 'Beamten Sprachform' vs. 'Arbeitersprachform' (Kramer, 1981: 102). The fact that most of the working class came from the Veneto explains the dominance of the Venetian accent in their variety (Mioni, 2001: 67). More recently there has been a tendency to use the Italian spoken in the city of Bozen as a standard variety and to get acquainted with the varieties of German spoken in the area (cf. Mioni, 1990: 23–4). In analogy to this distribution, the Italian of most members of the German speaking population is strongly standard oriented. The consequence is that for some of them standard Italian seems to be more natural (for historical reasons see Mioni, 2001: 68) than the standard variety of German ('High German').

Besides, the contact situation leaves subtle traces on both of the languages spoken in South Tyrol. So the type of intonation typical of the German dialects in South Tyrol (eine stärker modulierende 'Intonationskontur' (Riehl, 2000: 237)) is presumably due to Italian influence, as are certain pragmatic features. On the other hand, the phonological system of the German dialects seems to have an influence upon the pronunciation of Italian by members of the German-speaking group.

These short remarks may indicate that there certainly is a need for taking the Italian side of the language pair into systematic account to give a description and an explanation for the characteristics of the situation of language contact and linguistic variation we find in South Tyrol.

In the historical situation at the beginning of the new century the political discussion about the language situation has reached a new level. It is realistic to say (cf. Egger 2001ab) that in South Tyrol nowadays one tries to balance the relation of monolingualism and multilingualism in a new way. In doing this one has to strive for two conflicting goals: to take into account the new positive estimation of bilingualism and to maintain a distinct group identity.

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